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ABSTRACT

A variety of specific activities that have been successfully undertaken by the Council for American Private Education (CAPE) are suggested for state members. The activities are related to developing private school communications within states and developing working relationships with local, metropolitan, and state governments and their agencies. Also recommended are developing working relationships with the leading education-related agencies in the state and with the federal government--the administration as well as the Congress--on the state level. In addition, relationships are encouraged with private school advocates who have proven power among their peers in commerce, industry, the professions, government, the media, and the foundation world. Other activities are suggested that draw private school people into cooperative undertakings reaching across state lines. Finally, members are encouraged to maintain close contact with CAPE. (Author/MLP)

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STATE-LEVEL ACTIVITIES: A PLAN FOR ACTION

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The question as we close this first segment of our conference--the segment dealing with private schools and their state-level concerns--is where do we stand? Where do we stand, those of us who have committed our lives to serving children, their families and their value systems through our schools: Where do we stand--and where do we go from here?

My grandmother taught in the quiet hamlet of Stillpond, over on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. My father was vice-principal of the Baltimore Friends School before he moved and for 27 years served as Headmaster of an independent school for boys outside of Baltimore. For over 50 years, consciously and systematically, I've followed, in the preparation and on the job, a career in private school administration--as a school-age student trainee, an apprentice, a graduate student, a teacher, a junior administrator, for 21 years an independent school Headmaster, and now for more than four years as Executive Director of CAPE. My responsibilities have been on the school level, the local level, the metropolitan level, the state level, the regional level, and the national level. I've had an opportunity in the pursuit of those responsibilities to deal, I think, with most of the kinds of people representing most of the kinds of schools, public and private, which are to be found around this country. When I say where I think we stand and suggest where I think we might go, I say it and I suggest it from that lifetime of experience--from a lifetime of happiness and disappointment, enchantment and disenchantment. And if you sense in what I say some passion for the social and philosophical values I've found inherent in the American private schools, you sense it accurately. It seems to me appropriate to acknowledge the experience and the passion at the outset.

Where do we stand? For all of the private schools' very real problems, for all of the doom-sayers, for all of our sincere and dedicated detractors, we stand not carefree, but in strength. The private schools stand in strength, first, because they're riding the early slopes of a cresting wave of public yearning for schools which know what they believe in, what services they intend to provide, and are prepared--and able--to say to parents: "In this we believe. If you do too, let's work together in bringing up our children." Positive enrollment trends in all of the major sectors of private education testify to this wave of popular support. Look at some of the facts, rounded figures from the best available data--five million children, 250,000 teachers, 20,000 schools. Twenty thousand schools which generate substantially more money annually for the support of the nation's elementary and secondary schoolchildren than does the federal government--about 35% more annually, as a matter of fact, about 9 billion dollars.

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The private schools stand in strength, second, because they're learning to work together, because private school people, you and I, are learning that our most strongly shared commitment is to the maintenance of our diversity. Our deep commitments to our divergent philosophical and theological value orientations constitute a dynamic, unifying force for our schools. Knowledgeable observers of the American educational scene have called the creation of CAPE, the gathering together of the principal elements of the American private school movement, historic--the most significant development, they say, in American education in the last quarter of a century. Whether or not we're prepared to go that far in the appraisal of this particular organization, the emerging pattern of mutual respect, of collaborative effort, this coalescing, is surely significant and tremendously encouraging.

The private schools stand in strength, third, because in combination they are a substantial public resource, a significant social agency, a recognized political force. That they are all these is evident in this week's private-school-focused activities here in Washington. There was, on Monday and Tuesday, at the invitation of Dr. Boyer, the first Commissioner's Meeting on Private Education--a meeting which parallels the meetings which have been held in the past for representatives of state governments and state education agencies to talk about their educational systems, their educational problems, and the relationships between the schools of their states and the United States Office of Education. We welcomed that invitation. We had an opportunity on Monday to talk with Dr. Boyer and key OE officials about the condition, the character, and the concerns of the private schools and then, the following morning, to sit with them and their staff representatives to discuss specifics concerning the attitudes, functions, and programs within the Office of Education as they related to our schools. There is this conference itself and the participants it has drawn from the highest echelons in the federal education establishment, from the states and the cities, from the Education Commission of the States, and from the scholarly community. And the week will end with a Research Conference on Private Education cosponsored by the National Institute of Education and CAPE. This will be, to the best of our knowledge, the first such meeting of scholars--a rigorously selected, broadly representative group from a variety of backgrounds and disciplines, both academic and professional--called to discuss the considerations which should go into drafting an agenda for research related to private education. There is the fact--abandoning Washington for the Deep South for a moment--that Fred Loveday could make it all the way up here from Georgia for this conference and bring along with him a pronouncement from Governor Busbee of that state proclaiming the week of January 30 "Private Schools Education Week" in that distinguished state. These kinds of measures, these kinds of indications, it seems to me, are significant as we look at the condition, the health, and the future of our schools.

So, asked where we stand, I say we stand not in Elysian fields but surely not either in the despairing, dispiriting, discouraging, debilitating emotional and financial rubble of the late 60's and early 70's. We stand in growing strength.

Granting that growing strength, where do we go from here? Asked in terms of the purposes of this segment of this conference, the question becomes: To what do we now turn our energies at the state level? Dr. Boyer has said that he would be urging the Chiefs to establish adequately staffed offices paralleling in the state education agencies the liaison and ombudsman functions carried so effectively in the United States Office of Education by Dwight Crum. Warren Hill and Buster Brouillet have suggested, also, that this is an essential move if the state education agencies are to establish the effective relationships necessary to meet state responsibilities to private schools and private school students. More and more such offices are being established across the country. If there is no such office in your state, I urge you to work to have one created. If there is one, I urge you, unless you are quite satisfied with its current capabilities and performance, to work now to have it strengthened. I suggest that as you work for the creation of such an office you use the support provided by the recent positive resolution of the Chiefs with regard to private schools, a rather dramatic turnabout of position after 25 years. I urge you to consider carefully, too, the suggestions implicit in the reports of the participants of this morning's experience panel and the wise counsel of Warren Hill and Buster Brouillet.

Beyond that, on the basis of recommendations of the members of CAPE's State Activities Task Force and out of my own experience, I have several handfuls of activities to suggest to you, activities which have been successfully undertaken in states across the country. The list may strike you as a bit daunting. It could seem downright overwhelming if it is heard as a compendium of things which should be done at once. Surely that's not what's intended. You will do, of course, only what can be done in the time you and your state associates have--and the time you have will be taken from schedules which are already tremendously heavy. You will work with the energy you and your state associates can somehow "call down" from your energy reserves--and those reserves are not inexhaustible. You will utilize that time and that energy in the ways which make best sense to you in your state. But you may be sure that your schools, and private education nationally, will benefit if you will find some time, tap some energy source, do what you can. I'm convinced that in this effort, as in most others, we can make great strides by taking small steps. Let me suggest a variety of specific activities, then, under seven major headings. This summary will be available on request from the CAPE office.

There are, first, those activities which are related to private school communications within states. CAPE Directors have identified a contact person for their schools within each state, providing there are as many as one of their schools in that state. In each state one of these contact people has agreed to serve as the CAPE State Representative. I suggest that if you're interested in working on the state level and you're not now a State Representative, you get in touch with these contact people and, particularly, with the State Representative for your state. These names are available through the CAPE office. I would hope, further, that you would identify and open communications with non-CAPE people within your state, that you would encourage an exchange of relevant

information, that you would initiate minor collaborative undertakings. Roger Sikkenga said this morning that the Broward County Non-Public School Association got started over coffee. Whether you start to talk over coffee, or after the ball game, or over a problem, it is important that the conversations start and that as many as possible are involved in them.

Work to establish a CAPE-type state organization if one does not already exist; join and strengthen it, if one does. One of the first things we in CAPE did when we looked to the future of state activities was to identify and turn to the people who were working in states that had already established effective organizations. We drew on their experience and suggestions and developed a model constitution--and that, too, is available, should you be interested in going to work to establish an organization of this sort. There were, in one degree or another of sophistication, ten such organizations when CAPE established its full-time office. There are now 22, and others are in formation. Fred Rhinelander, CAPE Associate Director, will be helping to strengthen private school activities on the state level. He has been directly involved in the creation of the Maryland-CAPE organization, and he and I will be eager to work with you whenever you are ready.

There are, second, activities directed at developing effective working relationships with local, metropolitan, and state governments and their agencies. I urge you to make yourself known to your governor and to his staff specialist on education. Let them know of your interest in educational matters and your desire to cooperate. Ask for private school representation on the State Commission of the Education Commission of the States. In the same vein, make yourself known to the party policy committees and the education-related committees within the state legislature. Get in touch with, establish a working relationship with, your State Board of Education. Let its members know of your interests, your talents, your contacts in the private school community, and of your concerns. Within the state education agency, get in touch with the Chief, the coordinator of private school services, the federal programs coordinator, the state programs person, and the advisory councils. Identify and move to establish similar relationships with the parallel functionaries in the greater metropolitan areas and in the other local education agencies.

There are, third, efforts which can be constructively made to develop sound working relationships with the leading education-related agencies in the state, public and private--the state chapters of the American Association of School Administrators, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. In working with these professional groups, you'll often be by yourself or one of a very small minority. That's all right--I'm urging you to be an active member of the private school minority. Establish contact with the independent colleges and universities, the teacher training institutions, the civic and youth groups, and the nonprofit cultural agencies in the arts, the humanities, and the sciences. Establish contact, search for common grounds rather than for differences, work together. Recognize that you are in the minority; be prepared, at the outset at least, to be on the outside, misunderstood, unappreciated, disregarded. Accept that the focus of the group's attention may seem at best peripheral to your interests. A solid case can be made for the general proposition that it

is precisely when you are most an outsider that your interest and presence are most important. In working with public school oriented groups, especially, I urge you to be prepared for such a role, and I urge your sensitivity, at least, to the argument that you serve private schools best when you serve all of education, public and private, best.

A fourth group of activities are those which involve relationships with the federal government--the Administration as well as the Congress--on the state level. It will prove useful to search out the principals (Congressmen, Senators, Administration officials) and identify yourself to them, but it will be useful also to get to know and get to be known by the staff members of their state offices. Stay in touch regularly; provide them with concrete facts about the place of private schools in their "domains"; ask questions about their positions on policy matters and legislation; offer to serve as a bridge between them and their private school constituents. It's quite clear that private schools will be most strongly supported politically if there is a strong national organization working with the federal government, strong state organizations working with state governments, and by a well-coordinated effort which brings the resources of each to bear upon problems on both levels.

A fifth area of activity is that concerned with the identification and development of constructive relationships with private school advocates who have proven interests in the welfare of private schools and proven power among their peers in commerce, industry, the professions, government, the media, and the foundation world. If there's one area in which I think we have done least well so far, it is this one. And it's one to which we must turn our attention forcefully and soon if we are to develop the financial and political strength we need to support our organizations and achieve our purposes.

Sixth, there are the activities which draw private school people into cooperative undertakings reaching across state lines. There is much to be gained from establishing contacts with private school people in other states, sharing information, and pooling resources. The CAPE State Representatives can serve as a starting point in such activities. There can be an exchange of publications, circular letters, and position papers. Invitations can be extended to attend meetings, to participate in conferences, in workshops and other professional programs. We at CAPE will be happy to assist in opening communications between states, adjacent or across the country, as they have common concerns. Recently in North Carolina, for example, there was a question with regard to mandatory achievement testing and a request to CAPE resulted in a memorandum to the CAPE Directors and State Representatives which, in turn, produced helpful letters to the folks in North Carolina from people across the country who were dealing with similar problems.

Finally, a seventh area of activity is the maintenance of close contact with your national organization and with CAPE. Keep us informed; strengthen our procedures; use our services; promote us as your agents in all appropriate ways. Help, particularly, in efforts to share information. See that the CAPE newsletter, OUTLOOK, with which most of you are familiar, is as widely distributed as possible. There is a second publication which goes only to the CAPE Directors and State Representatives. Called

NOTES, it is our in-house news service. Published every week or ten days (about 40 times a year), it's designed to move useful current information around the country as simply and rapidly as possible. Information flows to CAFE from many sources--national, state, and local--and, through NOTES, to key private school people on the national and state levels. Do take an active part in assisting with this flow of information. In short, lend your strength to the concept of collaborative private school effort.

Enough detail? I would expect so. It's a substantial charge. The important points are these. The private schools have served this society well. We must see that they continue to do so. What we can do together to support our schools is greater than what we can do separately. What we can each do in our own way, in our own place, in our own time, no matter how restricted, is important. Although we may never quite see how, or have our contributions noted, the cumulative impact of our individual actions can be tremendously important. The future of our schools lies in our own quality as people, as educators.

Strength and Godspeed to us all!